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Kaldhusdal named Wisconsin's representative to the National Teacher of the Year program

MADISON—A fourth-grade teacher at Magee Elementary School in Genesee Depot, who inspires his students to learn by doing, will represent Wisconsin in the National Teacher of the Year program.

"When a peer calls you the finest teacher they know and when students ask if you can be their teacher next year too, that is high praise," said State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster. "Terry Kaldhusdal has earned such praise by exhibiting teaching excellence. His devotion to students and community make him an ideal representative of Wisconsin teachers in the national Teacher of the Year program."

Kaldhusdal of Oconomowoc, was named the state's Elementary Teacher of the Year last month. A state selection committee recommended Kaldhusdal for the national award program from among the state's four teachers of the year. Carl Hader of Grafton, is Wisconsin's High School Teacher of the Year; Rebecca Marine of Menomonie, is the Special Services Teacher of the Year; and Anne Tredennick of De Forest, is the Middle School Teacher of the Year. They were among 86 public school teachers awarded a Kohl Educational Foundation Teacher Fellowship in spring 2006, making them eligible for the Wisconsin Teacher of the Year program.

"I believe the most important skill I can teach my students is how to think," Kaldhusdal said in his nomination materials. He models respect for all students and develops lessons that help them learn from each other and link the classroom with the community. "The key to solving problems of the future will depend on this generation's ability to work in partnership to find solutions," he said.

Kaldhusdal noted that the casual observer might not notice how classrooms have changed over the years, but are really worlds apart from previous generations. His students interact with other diverse student groups via technology. They participate in a weekly math forum through Drexel University in Philadelphia, using the web to share ideas for solving math problems with professors and undergraduates.

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Through e-mail they connect with students in Milwaukee for a book discussion. Kaldhusdal noted that neither student group had any idea they were communicating with someone of another race but modern technology created the bridge. “Race was not important. Words and ideas were,” he said.

Special projects include “Virtualville,” in which students learn about government by running for office, producing political ads, writing bills, and serving on legislative committees. He also has developed “The Mysteries of Aztalan” website < <http://magee.kmsd.edu/%7Ekaldhust/aztalanhome.htm> > to prepare students to think like archeologists prior to their field trip to Aztalan State Park. He recently trained other teachers across the district on how to use the website in their classrooms.

He developed a “Math Nights” series for community parents to demonstrate the district’s math program and advise parents on how they can assist their children in the study of mathematics. His “Math Baseball” unit has students gleefully converting fractions to decimals and percents for several weeks before accompanying their teacher and parents to a baseball game at Miller Park in Milwaukee. “When a parent becomes more involved in a child’s learning, it’s a positive step. When my students become more involved in their learning, it’s an enduring journey,” he said.

Tapping into his journalism experience Kaldhusdal has created a school newspaper that includes stories from students in every classroom, advertisements that pay for printing, and distribution of the paper through local businesses. The newspaper is an on-going project that links Magee Elementary classrooms with the community.

Kaldhusdal also has developed summer classes for the district’s gifted and talented program. He is a volunteer with the local historical society, school district educational foundation, public library, and the Milwaukee Art Museum. He produced a history of Oconomowoc video that continues to be played at Oconomowoc’s Lake Country Museum. The regional Young Authors Conference and statewide Wisconsin Writes Conference at the Milwaukee Art Museum, which he helps coordinate, provide a venue for students to experience connections between narrative writing and visual art. In evaluations students have written over the years, they call the event “the best day of my life.” A former student wrote of how Kaldhusdal inspired him as a student and coach. “Learning became exciting and interesting, something I had never thought possible.”

Kaldhusdal has been a fourth-grade teacher in the Kettle Moraine School District since 1999 and has been an educator since 1991. He earned a journalism degree from California State Polytechnic University of San Luis Obispo, and a teaching certificate from Chapman College in California. He earned a master’s degree in technology in education from Lesley College in Cambridge, Mass.

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